

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF LONGDON HELD IN THE W. I. HALL,
LONGDON, ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9TH, 2008

Present: Cllr. R. C. Hemmingsley (Chairman); Cllr. The Rev. J. R. Andrews;
Cllr. A. J. Juxon; Cllr. Mrs. H. A. Meere; Cllr. Mrs. J. A. Russell;
Cllr. N. Stanfield; Cllr. S. K. Welch.

Also present were the Clerk; Cllr. N. J. Roberts, of Lichfield District Council; County Councillor F. W. Lewis, MBE; and five parishioners - The Rev. Rob. Farmer, the newly-appointed curate to the parish; Mrs. Audrey Spalding; of The Croft, Longdon; Mrs. Kathleen Worrall and Mr. Richard Clark, both of Brook End, Longdon; and Mr. John Woodward, of Lower Way, Upper Longdon.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr. N. J. Bird; Cllr. Mrs. G. D. Duckett; and Cllr. M. A. W. Parsons.

Also absent was Cllr. B. J. Butler.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the previous meeting, held in the Meeting Room at Christ Church, Gentleshaw, on Tuesday, November 11th, 2008, were, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Welch, approved and signed.

3. PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The Chairman introduced Mr. Farmer and, on behalf of the Council, welcomed him to the parish. He expressed the hope that Mr. Farmer and his family would be very happy in Longdon and pledged the Council's continuing support for St. James Church.

He also welcomed the other parishioners to the meeting and asked if any wished to address the Council.

Mrs. Worrall said that she and Mrs. Spalding were attending the meeting to express their concern over reports that the Green Bus bus service between Rugeley and Lichfield was to be discontinued in mid-January, which would leave Longdon without public transport.

Cllr. Roberts informed the meeting that these reports had been made known to him through an email from Jaqui Hamblett, Team Attached Clerk, Family and Friends Fostering Team, who was trying to establish their accuracy and was hoping that Longdon would continue to be served by public transport, if only two or three times a week.

The Clerk reported that, following a phone call from Mrs. Spalding, he had spoken to Adrian Hunt, Group Manager for Co-ordination and Contracts, Integrated Planning and Transport Unit, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, who had confirmed that the bus company had served notice on the County Council two weeks ago that it intended withdrawing from Services 12 (which served Slitting Mill), 13 (which served Colton), and 14 (which served Longdon) in mid-January 2009.

He was currently conducting a survey into passenger numbers on these routes, but had assured the Clerk that the villages would not be left without any bus services at all, though they may be reduced from the present level.

He would also be seeking the views of parish councils on the type of public transport service which they felt best suited the needs of their parishes.

The Chairman promised Mrs. Worrall and Mrs. Spalding that they would be kept informed of any developments.

Neither Mr. Clark nor Mr. Woodward wished to address the meeting, having decided to attend the meeting as observers.

4. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Buildings of Local Interest

Cllr. Welch reported that the occupant of Freedom House had been a little disconcerted to read that her house had been nominated for inclusion on a list of buildings of local interest, but, after he had explained the limited scope of the project, she had offered copies of photographs showing the house as it was when it was still a bakery.

Cllr. Mrs. Russell, while agreeing to accept the task of collecting material for such a list, asked what the purpose was of compiling such a list and what use it would be put to.

Cllr. Roberts said that its purpose was simply to compile an almanac of buildings of interest which did not justify listing but might still have historic or heritage features. He confirmed that such a list would have no significance in planning terms

- there was no intention to create a new designation, for example - and would not involve the owners in any cost.

Cllr. Stanfield said that simply drawing up a list would not be enough in itself; the project needed an end project such as an entry on the parish website which would record some details of each building.

The Clerk suggested that the Council might even consider publishing leaflets similar to the footpath leaflets which it had already published or erecting heritage boards similar to those in Lichfield.

Cllr. Stanfield added that any owner must be allowed the right to ask for his or her property to be excluded from the list.

(ii) Land adjacent to Hay Lane/Stoneywell Lane, Longdon Green

Cllr. Roberts reported that, as far as he was aware, there had been no developments regarding a proposal to create a new farmstead on land adjacent to Hay Lane and Stoneywell Lane, which, in any case, Lichfield District Council would resist.

(iii) Footpath Survey

The Clerk reported that Mr. Will Rose, Co-ordinator of the Parish Footpaths Survey, had informed him that FP. 33 was now open, but that he had had a phone call from one of his volunteers, who had complained that horses were still making the use of Footpath 46 hazardous by their threatening behaviour.

Cllr. Stanfield reported that he had observed a notice displayed at the entrance to FP. 51 reading "Beware of the Dog", which he believed was illegal.

The Clerk was instructed to make Paul Rochfort, the County Council's Principal Rights of Way Officer, aware of these problems.

Cllr. Stanfield also reported that he had been advised by Mr. Rochfort that work on FP. 73 was imminent, but, up to the present, no work had been carried out, and he would be contacting Mr. Rochfort to try and establish a firm date.

Cllr. Lewis confirmed that work on restoring the surface of the footpath between Nos. 31 and 33 Church Way would not be starting until the next financial year.

(iv) Highway Bank at Grange Hill, Upper Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had, as instructed, written to R. J. Harris, Assistant Divisional Highways Manager, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, asking him to provide the name and address of the householder with whom he had been in contact regarding stabilising the highway bank in Grange Hill and was awaiting his reply.

(v) Play Area/Playing Field

The Clerk reported that he had, as instructed, written to both Chris Wardle, Chairman of Governors of St. James School, Longdon, and Alan Johnson, Chairman of the Management Committee of the Longdon Club and Institute, and was awaiting their replies.

(vi) Installation of Roadside Benches

Cllr. Welch reported that Mr. Johnson had completed the three benches and he would be establishing with him the sites where they to be erected.

Concrete slabs would be put in place around the benches once the benches had settled.

The six hawthorns were on order and would be planted as soon as they were delivered.

(vii) Future of Rural Post Offices

The Chairman noted that the Government had decide after all to renew the Post Office Card Account, which would secure the future of many rural post offices, including Longdon's, but the contract had been renewed for five years, not the customary ten, so the Council would have to continue to monitor the situation.

(viii) "Longdon Life"

The Clerk informed the Council that the latest issue of "Longdon Life" had been delivered or posted within three days of receiving it from the printers, due largely to the exertions of Hazel Crosbie and her family.

It was agreed that, once again, the issue was up to its usual high standard, and the Council's appreciation of the efforts of the contributors and the editor should be recorded.

5. PLANNING

(i) Report of Working Group

08/01222/FUL: Mr. Stephen Morris: Single-storey side extension to form hall, WC and kitchen: 1, Hay Lane, Longdon Green

Cllr. Stanfield reported that the Working Group had seen no reason to object to this application, though, as a result, the floor space would exceed the area permitted for extensions by 1.85 square metres.

(ii) For Consideration

No further planning applications had been received.

(iii) Approved by Lichfield District Council

The Clerk reported that he had received no Notices of Approval of Planning Permission since the last meeting.

(iv) Refused by Lichfield District Council

08/01032/FUL: Mr. & Mrs. Phillips: Refurbishment and single- and two-storey extensions and alterations to form kitchen, utility, billiard room, gymnasium, bedroom with en suite, plus detached garage with accommodation above, stables/kennels, re-location of swimming pool and re-instatement of entrance gate: Grand Lodge, Horsey Lane, Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had received no Notices of Refusal of Planning Permission since the last meeting.

However, the above application had been refused in spite of the planning officers' recommendation that it be approved, on the grounds of massing and design.

Moreover, in the view of the Committee, none of whose members spoke in favour of the application, insufficient weight had been attached by the planning officers to planning policies relating to its Listed Building status or its location within the Green Belt and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

In the unavoidable absence of Cllr. Stanfield from the meeting of the District Council's Planning Committee on November 24th at which the application had been considered, the services of Mrs. Janet Hodgson, of JVH Town Planning Consultants Ltd., Harlaston, had, after consultations between the Chairman, Cllr. Stanfield and the Clerk, been hired to represent the Parish Council.

The planning officers dealing with the application had also been criticised for failing to consult more widely and for encouraging the applicants to think that, having their support, the plans would inevitably receive approval.

There was also disagreement between the planning officers and members of the Committee over whether any of the proposals qualified under enabling legislation.

Concluding his report, the Clerk, who had been present at the meeting, spoke highly of the contributions of Mrs. Hodgson and Cllr. Roberts in ensuring that local concerns about the inappropriateness of the proposed development were recognised.

Cllr. Stanfield advised the Council to look closely at the Notice of Refusal of Planning Permission when it was finally received to ensure that it had recorded all the reasons for which planning permission was refused.

6. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

No reports were presented

7. NOTICE OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

The Clerk reported that, since the last meeting he had received notice of the following meetings and events:

(i) Carers Rights Day "drop-in" event: Friday, 5th December 2008, at The Guildhall, Lichfield, from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

(ii) Christmas Carol Service: Sunday, 21st December 2008, at St. James Church, Longdon, commencing at 6.30 p.m.

The Clerk reported that he had received a letter from the Rev. Rob Farmer dated 21st November 2008, in which he invited a member of the Council to read one of the lessons.

It was suggested that, as a relatively new member of the Council, Cllr. Mrs. Duckett might be asked to do it.

8. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

(i) Missing Roadside Direction Sign at Cleat Hill

The Clerk reported that he had received from Tim Buxton, Traffic Management Technician, Development Services Department, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 25th November 2008, explaining that this sign had been removed after it had fallen into disrepair and reached the end of its effective life.

To avoid clutter, the County Council now had policies to determine locations that would qualify for signage of this sort, and unfortunately Cleat Hill Farm would no longer meet the necessary requirements, so the sign would not be replaced.

(ii) Footpath Survey

(a) Public Footpath 10

The Clerk reported that he had received from Noreen Moore, Countryside and Rights of Way Group Leader, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 27th November 2008, informing the Council that this path had been inspected and a job sheet issued for some clearance work on the route.

(b) Public Footpath 11

The Clerk reported that he had received from Noreen Moore a second letter dated 27th November 2008, informing the Council that this path had now been inspected and it had been noted that the drainage ditch adjacent to the bridleway had been silted up.

However, responsibility for clearing the ditch rested with Lichfield District Council, and she had contacted them about carrying out this work.

(c) Acknowledgement from Dawn Green, Rights of Way Assistant

The Clerk reported that, in addition, he had received a letter from Dawn Green, Rights of Way Assistant, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 17th November 2008, acknowledging receipt of the Survey Forms relating to No. 0402, No. 35 and No. 39.

9. GREENS AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Gentleshaw Common

(a) Management of Area opposite Gentleshaw School

The Chairman reported that he had received from Richard King, Strategic Director, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 11th November 2008 suggesting a meeting between representatives of the District Council and the Chairman and Clerk of the Parish Council to discuss management of the Common and the issue regarding the parking of vehicles on the area of the Common next to Hollows Lodge.

This meeting would take place in the Conference Room at District Council House on Monday, December 15th, between 4. 00 p.m. and 5. 00 p.m.

He and the Clerk would attend, and he would be stressing that the Parish Council, though willing to accept advice, expected autonomy in the management of this area.

The importance of involving the school would also be stressed.

(b) Proposed De-registration and Exchange of Land

Cllr. Stanfield reported that site meeting had taken place between the Planning Inspector and Mr. Cox on Tuesday, November 25th, but the Parish Council had decided not to be represented, having made its concerns clear in correspondence with the Inspectorate.

The Clerk reported that he had received from Rob Davis, of the Common Land Casework Team, The Planning Inspectorate, Temple Quay, Bristol, a letter dated

26th November 2008, enclosing a copy of a letter from Mrs. S. Lawrence, of Keelys Solicitors, Dam Street, Lichfield, dated 21st November 2008, in which she had responded to the three points raised by the Parish Council as follows: the release land formed only a very small part of the land which was subject to the Certificate of Lawful Development; she was uncertain that reference to Bridleway 21 was relevant to the proposed de-registration application, but would look into the matter further if informed that she was incorrect; and she confirmed that her client did own the land which it was proposed to exchange, but title would have to be proved when the conveyancing formalities were dealt with.

(ii) Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Clerk reported that he had received by email two text-only versions of the Draft Management for the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the first on 28th November from Anne Walker, AONB Office Manager, Cannock Chase AONB Unit, and the second on 2nd December from Emma Beaman, Assistant AONB Officer.

(iii) Bus Shelter at Longdon Green

The Clerk reported that the bus shelter at Longdon Green had been damaged by a series of attacks by vandals and to prevent its further deterioration, Cllr. Welch had issued a Order Form for its repair.

The work would be carried out Alan Johnson.

10. LAW AND ORDER

(i) Joint Operations Update

The Clerk reported that he had received a Joint Operations Update dated 20th November 2008

There were no references to Longdon in the report.

(ii) Neighbourhood Crimewatch

The Chairman reported that he had received the report for November which had recorded two criminal incidents in Longdon, the first in Hay Lane on the 19th, when the lock on a container had been forced, and the second at Hill Top on the 22nd, when a similar offence had occurred.

11. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(i) Accounts for Payment

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Stanfield and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Meere, payment of the following accounts was approved:

≠*Instaprint, Rugeley	Printing 700 copies of "Longdon Life" and 600 inserts	£355. 96
≠*Hazel Crosbie	Delivering "Longdon Life"	£ 45. 00
≠*A. J. Juxon	Editor's expenses	£ 15. 00
Longdon W. I.	Hire of Hall – November 12 th : £12. 00	

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Hire of Hall – December 2nd: £12. 00
Hire of Hall – December 9th: £ 12. 00
£ 36. 00

W. B. Sullivan Clerk's Salary: £300. 00
Photocopying: £137. 85
≠Printing Gentleshaw insert: £ 7. 05
Postage: £ 19. 71
£ 464. 61

JVH Town Planning Consultants Ltd. Professional Fees – objections regarding Grand Lodge:
Fees: £300. 00; VAT: £52. 50 £ 352. 50

Aquajet Services Clearing road surface £ 45. 00

(*confirmation; ≠payment made under Section 137)

(ii) Payments Received

The Clerk reported that, since the last meeting, the following payment had been received:

C. T. Marshall Advertisement: "Longdon Life" £ 5. 00

(iii) Current Balances

The Clerk reported that, currently, the Council's balances stood as follows:

NatWest c/a: £1068. 54 The Halifax s/a: £16009. 98
(less uncleared cheque 1426: £ 12. 00
£1056. 54

(iv) Report of Meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Chairman presented a written report prepared by the Clerk on the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee which had taken place in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, on Tuesday, December 2nd, 2008 (*Appendix A*).

A financial statement had shown that expenditure was running slightly above budget, but this was due to the activities of the two Committees, whose expenditure depended on the amount of work they undertook. He reminded the Council that the budgets agreed for these Committees had been experimental, and it had been recognised that they might have to be increased.

The current level of the Council's reserves might mean that the Council would be able to decide on a reduced precept for 2009/2010.

The Committee had studied the contents of the two NALC documents sent by John Blount – LTN1 and LTN04 - and, in the light of its conclusions, was recommending amendments to the Council's Standing Orders. The Chairman distributed copies of the recommended amendments, which should, Cllr. Stanfield suggested, be endorsed by NALC before being formally adopted by the Council.

(v) Appeals for Grant Aid

The Clerk reported that he had received from Avril Green, Fundraiser – Cruse Bereavement Care, Lichfield & Cannock Districts, a letter dated 18th November 2008, asking for a donation of £200. 00 towards the work of her organisation.

It was pointed out, however, that the Council had already made a donation to the organisation in the current financial year, and the Clerk was instructed to invite Mrs. Green to renew her application in the next financial year.

(vi) Independent Internal Audit 2008/2009

The Clerk reported that he had received from John Blount, the Council's Independent Internal Auditor, a letter dated 14th November 2008, in which he informed the Council that, in view of the amount of time which he was now devoting to the Society of Local Council Clerks, he had decided that he must relinquish the role of the Council's Independent Internal Auditor.

In his place he was recommending Alan Topliss, formerly Clerk to Alrewas and Fradley Parish Council, who already carried out a number of internal audits.

The Clerk was instructed to write to Mr. Topliss asking him whether he would consider undertaking the work and, if so, what his fee would be.

12. CORRESPONDENCE SINCE LAST MEETING

(i) The Clerk reported that he had received from Sue Venables, Head of Communications, South Staffordshire NHS Primary Care Trust, a letter dated 16th November 2008, enclosing a copy of "Your Guide to Local Health Service in South Staffordshire 2008/09".

(ii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Michael Evans, Director, Acme Tree Services, Burntwood, a letter dated 25th November 2008, introducing his tree surgery company in the hope of becoming an approved contractor for Longdon Parish Council.

(iii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Neil Cox, Principal Plans Development Officer, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 27th November 2008, enclosing a copy of the Core Strategy Preferred Options Documents relating to the Lichfield District Framework and inviting the Council's comments by no later than 10th January 2009.

Cllr. Stanfield pointed out that these documents could be consulted by calling up the District Council's website, and he urged all Councillors to read them and bring their comments to the next meeting.

13. OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk reported that, in addition to the above correspondence, he had received the following communications:

(i) From Heather Gibbons, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 7th December 2008;
Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 21st December 2008.

(ii) From Judy Magill, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Minutes of meeting of Parish Forum held on 5th November 2008.

(iii) From The Licensing Officer, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Licensing Act Applications registered during w/e 14th November 2008;
Licensing Act Applications registered during w/e 21st November 2008;

Licensing Act Applications registered during w/e 1st December 2008.

(iv) From The Electoral Registration Officer, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Register of Electors 2009.

(v) From Holly Tunley, S3SN Admin. Assistant, Lichfield and District CVS:

E Bulletin – Issue No. 62, 21st November 2008;
E Bulletin – Issue No. 63, 27th November 2008;
E Bulletin – Issue No. 64, 4th December 2008.

(vi) From rekk.co.uk:

Promotional card: “Teenagers...here or where?”

14. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

(i) Cllr. Juxon reported that Lysways Lane was in flood once again, due, he thought, to the stream running the golf course.

The Clerk was instructed to refer this problem to the Divisional Highways Manager.

(ii) Cllr. Roberts informed the Council that he had been advised that a number of trees in Longdon Green were being trimmed in order to protect overhead cables from damage.

The trees to be trimmed were all covered by Tree Preservation Orders, and the consent of the District Council’s Arboricultural Officer had been sought and obtained.

(iii) Cllr. Roberts advised the Council that, from 1st October 2008, significant changes had been made to Permitted Development Rights, adding that Claire Billings, the District Council’s Development Control Manager, would be willing to attend a meeting of the Council to explain these changes.

It was agreed that Mrs. Billings should be invited to attend the next meeting of the Council.

(iv) Cllr. Mrs. Meere reported that a stile was missing at the Coldwell end of Footpath No. 1 (Tithe Barn – Coldwell).

Cllr. Stanfield said that he would investigate.

(v) Cllr. Mrs. Russell gave her apologies for her absence from the next meeting.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, January 13th, 2009, at the W. I. Hall, Longdon, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.